The Electronic Media Review
Electronic Media Group


Jeffery Warda and Briana Feston-Brunet, Managing Editors
Edited by Helen Bailey, Briana Feston-Brunet, Karen Pavelka, and Jeffrey Warda

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Layout by Amber Hares
(Original design by Jon Rosenthal, JonRosenthalDesign.com)
Typeset in Trade Gothic LT and Myriad Pro

American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works
Washington DC

The Electronic Media Review was published once every two years in print format by the Electronic Media Group (EMG), a specialty group of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC), until 2013 and published online only thereafter. The Electronic Media Review is distributed as a benefit to members of EMG who held membership during the year of the issue. Additional copies or back issues are available from AIC. All correspondence concerning subscriptions, membership, back issues, and address changes should be addressed to:

American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works
727 15th Street NW, Ste. 500
Washington, DC 20005
info@conservation-us.org
http://www.conservation-us.org

The Electronic Media Review is a non-juried publication. Papers presented at the EMG session of the AIC Annual Meeting are selected by committee based on abstracts. After presentation, authors have the opportunity to revise their papers before submitting them for publication in The Electronic Media Review. There is no further selection review of these papers. Independent submissions are published at the discretion of the EMG Publications Committee. Authors are responsible for the content and accuracy of their submissions and for the methods and materials they present. Publication in The Electronic Media Review does not constitute official statements or endorsement by the EMG or by the AIC.
LET’S TALK DIGITAL: AN APPROACH TO MANAGING, STORING, AND PRESERVING TIME-BASED MEDIA ART WORKS

ALEX COOPER AND ISABEL MEYER

ABSTRACT

Born-digital time-based media art is an emerging and rapidly growing art form that poses significant technology challenges to art museums and other collecting institutions across the globe. Within the Smithsonian Institution, the Office of the Chief Information Officer and the National Portrait Gallery are working together to address the unique challenges inherent in preserving works of this kind. Born-digital works are generated in real time using digital information stored in the form of binary data. As such, they are vulnerable to the same integrity or data corruption and obsolescence concerns as any digital file format or software. The preservation of born-digital works requires both IT-based infrastructure to safely store and organize this data, as well as an organizational method to document, describe, and categorize information related to the artist’s intent and the work’s provenance. To meet these needs, the Office of the Chief Information Officer has developed the Digital Asset Management System and the National Portrait Gallery has created the Time Based Media Archival Package. The Digital Asset Management System is an enterprise-level system used to store, manage, preserve, and share the Smithsonian’s rapidly growing collection of digital assets and related information. An enterprise digital asset management system is essential to meeting the Smithsonian’s objectives for the following: preservation and stewardship of objects and specimens; organizing, classifying, and locating digital assets; delivery of digital assets in multiple...
formats; public outreach and education and electronic commerce; and participation in external cultural heritage, library, and science initiatives.

The Time Based Media Archival Package is a method used to organize time-based media assets including the digital essence of the work, as well as related curatorial, exhibition, and collections management related documents. This presentation will include discussions of the Digital Asset Management System architecture (including hardware, database, application software, storage, staffing resources, and operational procedures); its functional aspects (such as user roles, asset security policies, ingest methods, metadata models, and transcoding); and the structure and various components of the Time Based Media Archival Package.

Alex Cooper
Lighting Designer
National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

Isabel Meyer
DAMS Branch Manager
Office of the Chief Information Officer
Smithsonian Institution
600 Maryland Avenue S.W., Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20024
(202) 633-6355
meyeri@si.edu